

The Relationship between Environment and the *Adivasi*: Affinity and Vicinity in Hari Ram Meena's *When Arrows Were Heated Up*

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Abstract

Tribal literature often refers to harmony between nature and man in a peaceful social environment, usually in the form of folktales and folk-songs. The Adivasi literature in the form of folklore has added to India's rich cultural and environmental heritage. Adivasi's love for nature is evident in India's history, culture and literature. Tribal literature raises questions concerned with social, economic and ecological affairs of the world. Literary writings are also filled with the representation of the natural environment. Tribal folk tradition and literature are gradually falling into nothingness as the tribal villages are uprooted, and tribes are displaced from their environment. The tribal literature in the form of unwritten folk-songs and folk stories reflects, in general, the harmony between nature and man in a peaceful social atmosphere. This research paper is based on the relationship between the environment/nature and Adivasi. It also includes with affinities and vicinities of tribals with nature. The objective of this paper is to explore various reasons behind environmental/nature degradations. The primary source is a text, "When Arrows Were Heated Up: : A Tale of Tribal Struggle Against British Colonialism" composed by Adivasi writer Hari Ram Meena.

Keywords: Adivasi; Affinity; Environment; Literature; Vicinity.

Introduction: Adivasi literature portrays various phenomena such as ethnicity, culture, caste and racial discrimination, gender inequality, socio-economically underprivileged people, citizens of distinct geographical locales, etc. Adivasi societies have settled away from metropolitan cities for ages. The entire social system of Adivasi people has a deep connection with the environment. Adivasi is mainly dependent on forest-related

resources. Adivasi are more inclined towards protecting nature. Indian Adivasi literature establishes a deep connection between the environment and Adivasi in a unique way. Nature and its surroundings are an essential part of human life; without the amelioration of nature, human life is not possible on the earth. It provides us with everything which is necessary to live, such as air, water, and food. Moreover, the term environmentalism/nature describes awareness regarding ecological crises such as global warming and pollution. On the one hand, tribals stand in favour of protecting nature but on the other side, capitalists encroach within the spheres of nature. As a result, global warming and pollution are adding to the world's problems. Globalization paved the way for literary transfusion, which is liable for the remarkable development in the field of Adivasi communities. In the history of human civilization tribes have preserved their environments like water, land, and forest. Moreover, they are aware of their traditional knowledge, custom, belief, singing, dancing, and hunting. Initially, Adivasi did not have their history and literature.

Material: Primary source is literary text, Hari Ram Meena's *When Arrows Were Heated Up*.

Methods: As an academic research paper, the present study employs a qualitative research method of collection of data, observation, textual interpretation, and textual analysis. Data for the present research paper has been taken from primary literary text as well as secondary sources.

Thus, they were represented by non-Adivasi authors, critics and social activists. As a result, they have been marginalized since ancient times. When one looks at tribals as marginalized others then they are sidelined from the mainstream society. In fact, Marginality gains prominence when agents of discrimination function in spheres like politics, culture, economic matters, and ecology/environment. Human and non-human entities are part of the ecosystem that rely on each other for survival reasons. Though matters concerned with land, water and forest are embedded in the Adivasi novel for analysis which also includes environment/nature in general flora and fauna.

Environment/nature concerns are the central point of discussion among scholars in the second half of the twentieth century. The relationship between tribal literary text and environment/nature is very crucial. Cheryl Glotfelty says, "... the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty, preface xviii). Environmentalism raises concerns for wildlife whereas interrogates threats from human beings. Af-

ter seventy years of decolonization, indigenous communities continue to be the weaker section dependent on mainstream society. Tribes are known as the preserver and protectors of the environment/nature. They utilize the objects of nature to fulfill the basic needs of life. They do not erode the biodiversity and the ecosystem of the world environment. On the other side, environment has crossed the red line of pollution. Lawrence Buell remarks that environment study must be "conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis" (Buell 430). Environmentalism raises concerns for wildlife whereas it interrogates threats from human beings. Tribals have close connection with physical environment and nature. The relationship between nature and environment have highlighted by tribal and non-tribal writers. On the other side, environment has crossed the red line of pollution. An environment is polluted by industrialization and urbanization. Waste materials coming out from factories also increase pollution. Developing countries do not have technology to manage waste material. Jungles are destroyed and factories are opened. Alongside, marginalized societies have been suffering from slavery since imperial time. Indian marginalized communities like peasants, labourers, women and third gender are exploited and subjugated by the landlords and moneylenders.

Environmentalists held the modern way of living responsible for environmental deterioration, "[t]he relationship between man and his physical environment has always been interesting to a literary critic" (299). Thus, the exploitative strategies of capitalists are threats to the environment and tribals.

The issues of environment/nature have an essential role in ancient literature. Nature keeps the surroundings balanced and every creature has its own lifecycle. Nature has its own ways of consuming dead and degraded material on the earth. But, it is the human who have created a havoc of this smooth working of nature by their inappropriate and illegal ways. Human beings thus exploit and use other species as well as plants for their selfish use. It causes a lot of disturbance to the environment. We fail to understand that within mother nature, there is no hierarchy and human beings depend on nature as much as nature is dependent on human beings. Adivasi literature often refers to harmony between nature and man in a peaceful social environment, usually in the form of folklore, folktales, folksongs and performance. Indigenous literature raises questions concerned with social, economic and ecological affairs of the world. It is a widely debated issue in the ecological paradigm wherein natural resources are exploited by non-natives. Adivasis are the native inhabitants of India; they hold a key position in preserving the environment and nature,

which mainstream society does not. The Adivasi literature in the form of folklore has added to India's rich cultural and environmental heritage.

Adivasi's love for nature is evident in India's history, culture and literature. Regarding the history of Adivasi, it has ancient antiquity from the beginning of human civilization and will be to the end of civilization in either phase of enculturation. But in the modern age, it is unnoticed. For them, nature is not only a place where they inhabit; it is also connected with their collective identity. For them, nature is not only the source of their livelihood; it is also a matter of their trust and ritual. So adivasi, the nomenclature denotes those communities who live in the forest and conserve the ecology system. Adivasis are connected not only physically but also emotionally. As they say for themselves, "[w]e save the forest and the forest saves us" (Baskaran n. pag.). So for them, nature is all, and all is nature.

Adivasis have a filial relationship with nature, they work and sleep irrespective of the humdrum of city life. They measure their happiness with seasons, months, trees, flowers, animals, waterfalls and rivers. Therefore, for them, nature is not only an element of piety but also the place where they co-exist with their belief, gods and the habitation of all living and non-living things. In the historical fiction, *When Arrows Were Heated Up*, Hari Ram Meena has pinpointed the historical facts of the struggle of adivasi with the system of the British Raj and the feudal system of Rajputana reign along with it, he has also projected the way of lives of the Adivasi communities like Bhil, Meena and how these communities have co-existed with nature. Mathew Areeparampil remarks:

No individual has the right to alienate the land from the community permanently. The tribe is the trustee of the land it occupies. The community or tribe includes not only the living members but also the ancestors and future generations. That is why for the indigenous people, land and blood are homologous. Their society, culture, religion, identity, and very existence are intimately linked to the land they hold (Areeparampil 244).

The author has beautifully portrayed the picture of the boarding place of natives and their harmony with nature in this way, "[o]n the border of Banswara and Dungarpur states was the village Bhukiya, a small part in the middle of Aravali hills. Thick forests and irregular black hills surrounded the village" (Meena 22). The location of their village Bhukiya village, represents the sublime beauty and proximity of the lush green

beauty of nature where Adivasi have built their perfect harmony with nature, including other creatures. They have made a perfect bond with nature and measured every inch of the forest. If an outsider infringes on the beauty and emotional ties with nature and disharmonizes with other creatures, the fury will ultimately be fired. The novelist has depicted another instance regarding the conservation of the forest of Adivasi in the reign of Raj and Maharaja Sajjan Singh of Udaipur district in chapter two of the fiction. As usual, the activities of Darbar are followed. Kotwal Rehmat Ali Bakhs reports several incidents regarding theft and the involvement of Adivasis in these acts. Shyamaldas informs about the worries of Adivasi regarding the new jungle laws. Regarding these laws and the interference of deforestation, Adivasi is worried. Therefore, a delegation of Adivasis comes to convey the message and worries about deforestation and the destruction of the jungle and the encroachment of British on their native places. The Mukhiya of Adivasi community says regarding the apprehension,

Sir, lengthy roads using stones and iron are being constructed through the jungles. We have heard that on these iron paths, bullocks of iron will haul big iron carts. It is said that this bullock will spit fire, burning all trees, vegetation and grass in the jungles (Meena 39).

The above statement of Mukhiya depicts the worries of Adivasi and their love for nature and the forest. They are not against the process of development of rail lines but for the destruction of jungle and forest and its flora and fauna, animals and the inhabitants of other creatures whose dwelling place is forest. It shows their filial and emotional attachment to nature. And King replied savagely, "You fools! Have you seen the world outside the jungles? Have you heard about the trains?" (Meena 39). This reaction against the wishes of Adivasis depicts the ignorance of the King towards the protection of the jungle because King has already surrendered himself to the Raj. That is why Adivasis are known as nature lovers. None of the courtiers and officials of King and Raj has not paid attention for the conservation of nature and the voice of subalterns i.e, Adivasi. On the contrary, Maharaja contemplates that he wastes his time with these savage people. Because of this savage reply, the heart and mind of the Adivasis start feeling and understanding the unwanted interference of Raj and Maharaja in their traditions and customs, which they are pursuing from the origin of the universe.

This incident takes place in Dungarpur territory, in which Maharawal

Udai Singh is supervising the duties of Raj administration. He is fond of hunting and killing innocent animals for the sake of his enjoyment and to please the Britishers. The writer portrays the picture of this area in which the beauty of ecosystem and the craftsmanship of nature represent scenic sublimity of the environment:

The Fawata jungle was dense and extensive. It was a forest of dark hills, hillocks, slopes, valleys and streams with plenty of teaks, Palash, Jamun, and mango trees. It had rich wildlife. At times tigers and leopards could be spotted there. The stormwater flowing from the hills used to find its way through the streams and nullahs into a giant tank common to the nearby villages of Kangarva, Virvada and Decha (Meena 55).

The action of nature destroyer is now being started with the British officers. In jungle, Maharawal is planning to construct a hunting platform so that killings of innocent animals will be safer and easy. But the work of construction has to be done under the system of begar (the system of forced labor). It means labourers are being collected for doing begar from the Adivasi community. But how lovers of nature or children of the soil can do such a heinous act? On the other side, Sampsabha led by Govind Guru is also working for the enlightenment of Adivasis against the begar system. Eventually, the construction of hunting platform is cancelled because Adivasis have opposed to do the work for this work, which is against the ethics of their community. Here the comment of Govind Guru is much remarkable to state, "There is no harm if you do begar for the good of man, animal or the jungle. But you will waste your life if you do something that is sin" (Meena 61). The message of Govind Guru encapsulates the thought of humanity, protection of the creatures of god, the preservation of the forest for the betterment of the environment and for the well-being of Adivasi community. Govind Guru's preaching works like a fire for the Adivasi, and they all have started to unite against the exploitation of nature and themselves, because it was against the ethics of the tradition of Adivasi. It infers that love for nature is an inherent value of Adivasi community.

The Dependency of Adivasis for Livelihood: Trade, Agriculture, and Forest Produce

Most of the adivasis' livelihood traditionally depended on the forest and its product and their relationship with the environment is indomitable. They are depended upon for fruit, yam and, broom, honey, thatch and other material of constructing the hut, herbs and medicinal plants, etc. in

the forest. Some of the Adivasi communities do farming and depended upon agriculture to fill their stomach. Thus, it can be interpolated that their livelihood, without the forest, is impossible in the real world. Bheel, and Meena Adivasis communities are also living in close harmony with nature, and their livelihood depends on cultivating a few patches of land, collecting honey and other forest products and occasionally hunting animals. In modern time, our social life have changed by global technology, but tribe culture and tradition have not changed because they are living in backward areas; tribes find pleasure in their backward areas like forests and hills, a world of their own. Verrier Elwin remarks, "Let us teach them that their own culture, their own arts are the precious things that we respect and need. When they feel that they can make a contribution to their country, they will feel part of it. It is therefore, an important aspect of their integration" (Elwin 87).

However, Adivasis are connected with nature. The fiction *When the Arrows were Heated Up* portrays the lifestyle of Bhil Adivasis society. The incident of hailstone, rain and lightening has ruined the crops of Adivasis in the month of Phagun. This month coincides with mid march or mid April month time. Now the question of livelihood and food is the main problem of these forest dwellers. Their suffering has been doubled in the reign of "Ram (Lord) and Raj" (Meena 31). This morning is ominous for Adivasi because of the heavy loss of crops due to hailstone. Now they are approaching to Jagirdar (Money lander) to get help to sustain their life, but the case has been disposed off. Now Adivasis are helpless, hungry and downtrodden, dependent, marginalized, bruised, demoralized and unvoiced in the hands of mainstream people.

Apart from this, Raj has lodged many restrictions on the trade of salt, and it is compulsory to pay taxes on trading salt that their generations have been doing for centuries. Because of the heavy hailstorm, Adivasis are disappointed and this tragedy is bigger for Adivasis "... than the death of a dear one" (Meena 26). Govind Guru has suggested what they should do to get out of this calamitous situation. He tries to restore their confidence and to trust in God. He fulfills the condition of saying that whatever God does, he does it for good and has partaken his part from them because he gives them a lot. Govind Guru suggests first thing to "learn to fill the places rendered empty" (Meena 27). As for the matter is concerned for animals and cattles, jungle is full with grass and fodder as Hari Ram Meena remarks:

As for your stomachs, go far out into jungles and collect gum, catechu, honey, dry twigs and any other thing useful. Instead of selling these to the

village Bania (trader), if you sell them at the haat (weekly market), you will get a better price. Besides, the mahua tree can always be banked upon to give something (Meena 27).

Therefore, in general, it can be assumed that Govind Guru is teaching adivasi how to trade your products to get a bigger amount of money, for the jungle is the best source of their livelihood. Because for centuries, they have served and saved forests and now forest will serve and save them. Bhil Adivasi community lead a self-sufficient life. Hunting is not a livelihood for Bhil; the tribe fined regeneration in it where the environment balance is not confusing. Tribes people collect the goods from the jungle and they sell it in the shop for their livelihood, which is discussed in the introduction to Adivasi in Colonial India, writer Biswamory Pati says in his book "Adivasi in Colonial India: Survival, Resistance and Negotiation" (2011) point of view:

The forests were seen by many tribal groups as essential for fulfilling their basic needs...They also depended on forest produce like fruits and roots for their medicines. These tribal communities also sold forest produce including lacquer and ingredients to produce dyes in the local market, and in turn bought essential commodities like rice and other grains, salt and oil (Pati 11-12).

Govind Guru tells the use of Mahua and for giving up alcohol, "Use the fruit as vegetables or extract oil from it" (Meena 62). These forest items sell in the market to earn some money. In the heart of the jungle, plenty of fruits, vegetables and herbs are available, and these should be used for food so that they can get out of this dreadful calamity.

Degradation of Environment and the Exploitation of the *Adivasi*

The exploitation of nature and the indigenous has a cheek and jowl relationship. If one is destroyed, the other will also be contaminated and they are working to save the vegetation and trees of the forest because they are dependent upon the forest since the origin of the universe. But things have been changed in the reign of Lord and Raj as "[t]he forest policy of the government and the laws has ended the Adivasis right over the forest produce" (Meena 298). Therefore, the trees and plants of the forests, which the Adivasis watered with their blood, today they are cut them in the hope of a better future. This is a very sad and ironic incident that is going to happen in their life, because in the present scenario, the land is more important than forest from the point of permanent cultivation although, they

do not know how much land they will be owned. Consequently, Adivasis who are called forest dwellers now have eccentricity to clear the forest as much as they can so that Adivasis can get add a permanent solution to cultivate the land as proposed by the writer. Hari Ram Meena has taken the issue of the clearance of the Darvah jungle by the Adivasis under the disguise of better development in the area of Laxamanpura. The description of the land has been given by Jassubhai to Pal Pitarbhai, “[t]he earth is lovely and totally black. You can raise any crop on it. It’ll grow like gaundara (a kind of grass that grows very thick) but will yield gold” (Meena 295). So the next day, Adivasis, with their traditional tool, get themselves busy clearing the forest. They have worked hard with their entire family to clear the forest from early morning to late night. This operation is so disastrous for animals and trees and creatures of the forestland. It is portrayed as:

As the trees and bushes began to be cut, these animals looked for the safer parts of the forest. But the safe area was also getting smaller and smaller. The animals then looked beyond the forest for their habitat. All these animals, bears, hyenas, deer, rabbits, fox and wild cats, all ran towards the hills of Rojava Kanadar for shelter. Some migrated to the forest around the Pal plateau. The birds flew to the trees in distant areas. Snakes and reptiles were running in all directions though most had preferred to stay in the safety of their burrows (Meena 298).

Thus, the situation above indicates the harsh reality of greedy people that how they all have destroyed the trees and vegetation of the forest for the sake of a few coins. But in the heart and mind of Adivasis and Jagirdars

Jagirdars means money lenders, this Jagirdar system was developed in India during the time of Muslim rule, that collected the land revenue for the king during the Mughal period. The farmers come under the Jagirdar.

have the only thing that is to clear forests as much as possible. The Patel family of the village is getting enjoyment when the trees of the forest by making the sound thud and creaking the wood fall down on the land. It indicates that consumerist ideology and the personal interests of man has ruined the life of species, birds and vultures who are selfless and nature-serving, as well as innumerable wild animals, were put to death due to greed and neither the Adivasis nor the Jagirdar and gameti have been affected by this horrific incident. This kind of exploitation of nature has been done by the educated and cunning human society due the materialistic ideology. Adivasis have also been exploited a lot to clear the forest

because it is the month of Jeth and fierce sun and hot loowinds are running, and in consequence, “[t]he top skin on the naked shoulders and the back of the Adivasis looked scabby because of the intense heat” (Meena 299). Despite this situation, the zeal of Adivasis is so ambitious in the hope of a better future, no matter how much labour they have done. Adivasis have been exploited by the Jagirdar by applying the conditions. In the current year, there will not be imposed a levy on Adivasis for producing the crops on the land, but after that, they have to pay taxes on land to Jagirdar, and how much they will have to pay is not clear. So Adivasis have also been exploited along with nature.

Tribes cannot think about the existence of life without forests, owning land and water. They are not only depended upon for livelihood on agriculture and but their culture has also imbibed the miasma of the environment. The stories of tribals highlight the assimilation nature of their culture.

Result and Conclusion: The ethics of Adivasis regarding the preservation of the environment is implicit in their culture, belief, myth, and traditional knowledge. The deep-rooted values of Adivasis to maintain harmony with nature and celebrate the festivals are traditionally ingrained in the ways of life that they pursue. The relationship of tribals with nature has been located for quite a long time. This relationship obtained a piece of profound information and comprehension of environmental cycles and moderate lifestyles. They have an environmental insight perpetually woven into their culture’s actual texture. How the nation is going through a time of change in its thrill ride towards modernization, the tribals are becoming mindful of the modern esteems, absorbing a portion of these, yet sticking to their practices of religion and convention. The tribals have enthusiastic holding with the forests, and grave injustice is done to them by grabbing and confining their conventional habitation of forest in independent India. The fundamental reason for the destruction of the cultural ethics of tribals is the greed of mainstream society. Nature is the source of their livelihood, providing forest products and other natural resources. But the advancement of science and modernization has influenced the natural world of tribal, which has been destroyed due to the expansion of industrialization. Both the colonial Government and Indian Government just robbed nature in the name of development. Tribals are still marginalized in the age of globalization and far away from development.

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